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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislative Update: 9-1-1 For Rural Health Care

Washington, D.C. --

Many times in Washington, D.C. the voices of the powerful lobbyists, big corporations and special interests ring loud and clear above the American people. This disparity is no more apparent than when it comes to the voices of rural America. As a Representative from rural Oklahoma, I see constant maneuverings to cut programs for rural America and to undermine our values. One clear example of this is with health care programs in rural America. I fully intend to not let the voices of rural Oklahoma be drowned out amongst the powerful and influential.

With the proposed budget, funding for health professions training would be cut from \$377 million to \$81 million, an 80 percent reduction. Rural access to emergency devices would be cut from \$12 million to two million, an 83 percent reduction. And funding for state offices of rural health would be cut from eight million to four million, a 50 percent reduction.

And these are just a couple of the programs that are to be reduced. Some of the cuts call for a 100 percent reduction, completely eliminating the funding.

Even without these cuts rural health care is already in danger. That is why I am opposed to cuts that take away funding from rural health care. The people in this country deserve the best health care regardless of where they live.

Already rural residents are less likely to have employer-provided health care coverage or prescription drug coverage, and the rural poor are less likely to be covered by Medicaid benefits than urban residents.

As a Representative of one of the most rural districts in America, I know first hand that rural residents are more likely to describe their overall health status as fair/poor than urban residents, and chronic illnesses are more prevalent. I know that rural residents tend to be elderly and need more medical attention. And I know that Medicare payments to rural hospitals and physicians are dramatically less than those of urban residents for equivalent services.

This correlates closely with the fact that more than 470 rural hospitals have closed in the past 25 years. Which makes it even more difficult for rural residents to get to a hospital.

We cannot cut corners where there is no corner left to be cut. We have to fight for our right for equal health care. As your representative and fellow Oklahoman I will support rural health care and make sure that you as my constituents have a voice in Washington.

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